

What is claimed is:

1. Apparatus for selectively controlling access to one or more of plural areas of a gaming machine, the apparatus comprising:

plural electrically operable lock mechanisms respectively associated with the areas and each movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area;

control circuitry including a processor operating under control of a stored program and coupled to each of the lock mechanisms for controlling operation thereof;

a data storage and retrieval system adapted to communicate with the processor and including a storage medium for storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the areas, if any, of the machine for which a person seeking access to the machine is authorized; and

a data input device coupled to the processor for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to an area of the machine,

the processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for operating one or more lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the data input device includes a keypad.

3. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the data input device includes a card reader, the data storage and retrieval system including a personal data card assigned to a person seeking access to the machine and readable by the card reader.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the data input device further includes a keypad.

5. The apparatus of claim 1, and further comprising one or more doors respectively associated with one or more areas and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, each door being movable between open and closed conditions.

6. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein each lock mechanism directly controls access to its associated area.

7. The apparatus of claim 5, wherein each door includes a manual latch, the lock mechanism for a door indirectly controlling access to the associated area by controlling enablement and disablement of the manual latch.

8. The apparatus of claim 5, and further comprising sensing apparatus for sensing the condition of each door and each lock mechanism.

9. The apparatus of claim 1, and further comprising a remote control apparatus in communication with the processor for control thereof from a remote location.

10. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein at least one area includes a switch, the associated lock mechanism enabling and disabling the switch.

11. Apparatus for selectively controlling access to one or more areas of each of a plurality of gaming machines, the apparatus comprising:

plural electrically operable lock mechanisms respectively associated with the areas of the machines and each movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area,

each machine having a local processor coupled to each of its lock mechanisms and a local data storage and retrieval device coupled to the local processor for storing a program for controlling the local processor,

a host computer in data communication with each of the local processors,

a host data storage and retrieval device storing a host program for controlling the host computer and a database including data relating to the identifications of all authorized personnel and the area or areas of each machine for which each person is authorized access,

input/output apparatus coupled to the host computer, and

local data input devices respectively coupled to the local processors for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to the associated machine,

each local processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for communicating it to the host computer for comparison with the database and being responsive to signals from the host computer for operating one or more of its lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person.

12. The apparatus of claim 11, and further comprising one or more doors respectively associated with one or more areas and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, each door being movable between open and closed conditions.

13. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein each machine includes monitoring apparatus for monitoring the conditions of all of its doors and lock mechanisms.

14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein each of the local programs includes a routine for communicating the conditions of the machine's doors and lock mechanisms to the host computer.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the input/output apparatus includes a display device for displaying local conditions at each machine.

16. The apparatus of claim 11, wherein each machine includes a plurality of lock processors coupled to the local processor and each associated with a lock mechanism for controlling and monitoring operation thereof.

17. In a gaming machine having an access door movable between open and closed conditions and a lock mechanism for the door including a lock bolt movable between unlocked and locked conditions, apparatus for monitoring the conditions of the door and the lock bolt comprising:

a processor operating under control of a program stored on a storage device,

a first transducer apparatus associated with the door and coupled to the processor for sensing the condition of the door and generating a first output signal indicative of the condition of the door, and

a second transducer apparatus associated with the lock bolt and coupled to the processor for sensing the condition of the lock bolt and generating a second output signal indicative of the condition of the lock bolt,

the processor program being responsive to the first and second output signals for storing on the storage device data indicative of the conditions of the door and the lock bolt.

18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein each of the first and second transducer apparatus includes optical apparatus.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the optical apparatus includes an optical emitter and an optical receiver.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the optical apparatus includes an optic pathway between the emitter and the receiver.

21. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the program includes a routine for modulating the emitter of each optical apparatus.

22. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the program includes a routine for controlling the operation of the lock bolt between its unlocked and locked conditions.

23. The apparatus of claim 17, and further comprising an apparatus for manually operating the lock bolt.

24. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the second transducer apparatus includes apparatus for indicating that the lock bolt has been manually operated.

25. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the transducer apparatus includes an optical emitter and an optical receiver and an optic pathway therebetween, the optical pathway being alterable in response to manual operation of the lock bolt.

26. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the gaming machine includes additional doors and lock bolts, and additional processors and additional first and second transducer apparatus respectively associated with the additional doors and lock bolts.

27. In a gaming machine having a mechanical key-operated latch assembly including an actuator member movable by a key between latching and unlatching conditions, access control apparatus comprising:

an electrically operable lock mechanism movable between first and second conditions,
and

control circuitry coupled to the lock mechanism for controlling operation thereof,
the lock mechanism being disposed so that in its first condition, it prevents movement of the actuator member from its latching condition and in its second condition it permits movement of the actuator member between its latching and unlatching conditions.

28. The apparatus of claim 27, wherein the lock mechanism includes a motive device.

29. The apparatus of claim 28, wherein the lock mechanism includes a solenoid.

30. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the lock mechanism is disposed in its first condition when the solenoid is de-energized.

31. The apparatus of claim 29, wherein the lock mechanism is in its first condition when the solenoid is energized.

32. A method of selectively controlling access to one or more of plural areas of a gaming machine, the method comprising:

providing each area with an electrically operable lock mechanism movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to the area;

storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the areas, if any, of the machine for which a person seeking access to the machine is authorized;

inputting at the machine at least personnel identification information identifying a person seeking access to the machine at the time access is sought; and

electrically unlocking the lock mechanism of only those areas, if any, for which the person seeking access is authorized.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein at least a portion of the data is stored on a personal data card assigned to a person seeking access to the machine, the inputting step including reading data from the personal data card at the machine.

34. The method of claim 32, and further comprising controlling the lock mechanisms from a remote location.

35. The method of claim 32, and further comprising providing one or more areas with doors movable between open and closed conditions and respectively provided with lock mechanisms, and monitoring the condition of each door and each lock mechanism and providing an indication thereof.

36. The method of claim 32, and further comprising providing a manual override key for each lock mechanism and providing an indication when a lock mechanism has been manually operated.